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January 1986

Iceland Post Report

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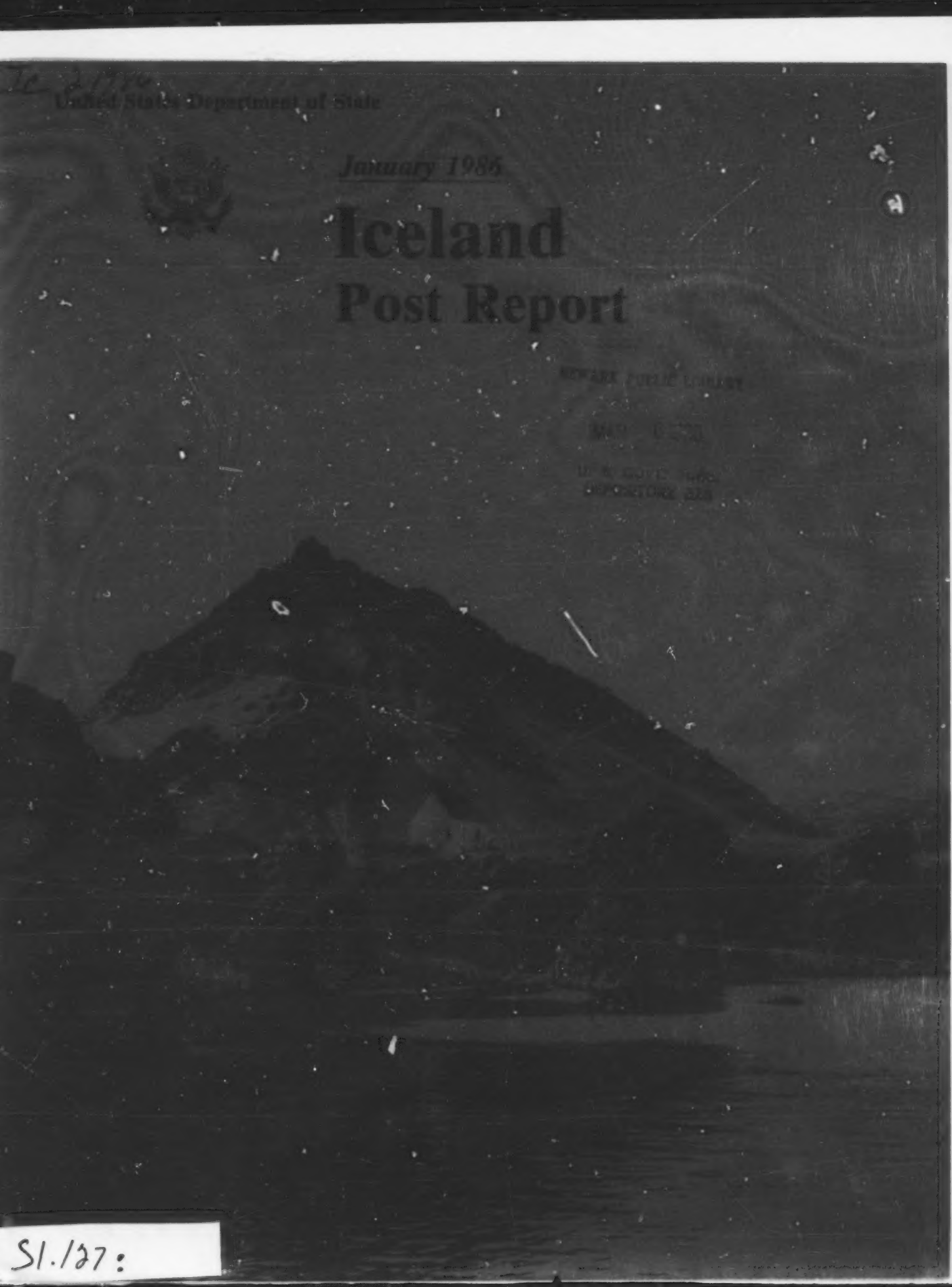

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Preface

Iceland is a developed Western European nation where citizens enjoy a high living standard in an unpolluted and sparsely populated environment. Born in the recent geological past when volcanic forces burst through the Earth's crust, Iceland abounds in rugged lava flows, rushing rivers, massive glaciers, hot springs, and active volcanoes. It is the "Land of Ice and Fire."

The climate is influenced by the Gulf Stream. Winter temperatures are not as low as in other Scandinavian capitals, but winters are nevertheless windy and raw, and summers are cool. Iceland's northerly location results in extremes of light and dark, ranging from 4 hours of sunlight in December to continuous, exhilarating light during the Midnight Sun period from late May to late July.

Icelanders are friendly, but they tend to be somewhat reserved with foreigners due to their long history of isolation, strong sense of cultural identity, and close family ties. Newcomers must take the initiative to establish contacts in the local community. Single persons, especially those without representational responsibilities, will have to make an extra effort in this regard.

An assignment here is especially attractive for those who enjoy pure air and water, wide open spaces, and such outdoor sports as hiking, fishing, and skiing. Reykjavik, the world's northernmost capital, is a clean, smokeless city; most buildings are geothermally heated hot water. The metropolitan [illegible] large enough to support a surprising [illegible] professional theater companies, ballet, opera, movie theaters, art museums, restaurants, and discotheques.

Although the winter darkness is long and can be depressing, the great majority of those who have served in Reykjavik have enjoyed their tour in this unspoiled, beautiful nation.

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The Host Country

Area, Geography, and Climate

Iceland, the second largest island in Europe (39,706 square miles), is slightly smaller than Virginia. Three-quarters of the country is a wilderness of deserts, lava fields, glaciers, and volcanoes (some extinct, some not). The landscape is so lunar in some areas that American astronauts trained here in the early sixties to prepare for the first moon landings. A distinct beauty is found here in the treeless landscape. Often the combination of crystal clear air and brilliant sunshine creates vistas which can only be described as breathtaking. This is Big Sky country, and rivers and waterfalls are abundant. In summer the inhabited coastal area is verdant, and pastures are filled with sheep, horses, and cows. In the dark of winter, the same area is windswept, often snow-covered, forbidding, and frequently inaccessible. Large varieties of bird species make Iceland a paradise for bird watchers.

Despite its location at 64° N latitude, close to the Arctic Circle, Reykjavik's climate is similar to that of the northern U.S. west coast, although cooler and windier. The Gulf Stream helps keep the annual mean temperature at 41°F. Changes between summer and winter are not extreme. It is rarely very cold in winter; never really warm in summer. Winter temperatures below 20°F are unusual, as are summer temperatures above 60°F. But wind blows year round, and a windchill factor between −15°F and 10°F is common in winter.

Cooler weather lasts from October through April. Snow may fall in Reykjavik as early as September and as late as June but often does not come until October or November and is rarely seen after April. Even in midwinter, rain is as likely as snow. A large accumulation of snow is rare. Average annual rainfall is 32 inches in Reykjavik. During winter and spring, winds in the capital can reach hurricane force. Overall, the winter climate is not as severe as that of New England or the Great Lakes, but on a year-long basis Iceland's weather is decidedly on the cool side.

Iceland is so far north that the amount of daylight varies considerably throughout the year. An average daily gain of 6 minutes of daylight follows the winter solstice on December 21, and a daily loss of 6 minutes follows the summer solstice on June 21. December and January have only about 4 hours of daylight; in February the days begin to lengthen rapidly; and by April they are as long as at midsummer in the U.S. From late May to late July there is no darkness at all—20 hours of sun (or clouds) and 4 hours of twilight. Following this period of "light nights," the sun slowly retreats and by October the days begin to shorten as rapidly as they lengthened in the spring.

Since the climate is cool, mildew and insect pests are rare, but on windless days flies, moths, and annoying gnat-like insects surround lakes. Persons fishing sometimes find a face net useful.

Earthquakes are common in Iceland but are rarely felt in Reykjavik. Volcanic activity is infrequent but rather spectacular when an eruption does occur. The underwater volcano which created the new island of Surtsey in the Westmann Islands off the south coast began erupting in November 1963 and remained active through 1967. In January 1973, a volcanic eruption on Heimaey Island in the Westmann Islands forced the evacuation of all 5,000 residents and destroyed over 300 homes and buildings. In the Krafla area, near Lake Myvatn, a significant eruption lasting several days in 1975 was followed by seven lesser eruptions in subsequent years, and surpassed in 1984 by an eruption along a linear front, lasting 2 weeks, which produced extensive lava flows. The most famous of Iceland's volcanoes, Mt. Hekla, which was expected to remain dormant for 100 years or so after its spectacular 1947 eruption, produced another in August 1980 and yet another in April 1981.

Population

Iceland is the most sparsely populated country in Europe, averaging just over five persons per square mile. As of December 31, 1981, more than half of Iceland's total population of 238,000, or 122,800, people lived in or around Reykjavik. The capital's population is 84,500. Kopavogur, a suburb of Reykjavik, is the next largest town with 14,000 people, and the third largest town is Akureyri on the central northern coast with 13,600 people. Keflavik, the town nearest the NATO base and 32 miles from Reykjavik, has a population of 6,700. The NATO base has about 3,000 military personnel and 2,000 dependents. Most other Icelanders live in small fishing villages or farming communities around the coast with from 200 to 2,000 inhabitants. The center of the country is completely uninhabited.

Excluding the American-staffed NATO base, only 800 U.S. citizens reside in Iceland. However, 18,000 tourists, business representatives, and other Americans visited the country in 1981.

Icelander are descended from Nordic and Celtic peoples who first arrived in AD 874 and rapidly settled the island, hitherto inhabited only by a few Irish monks who lived as hermits. Most Icelanders are knowledgeable about their family history, some tracing it back to the time of the settlements. The Icelandic language is of Germanic origin and was introduced from western Norway in the 9th century. It has gone through so few changes since the Viking age that an Icelander of today can read and understand 12th- and 13th-century literature, notably the famous Sagas, at least in the clarified texts produced by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Embassy

provides Icelandic language instruction and study materials to all interested personnel and dependents. Although the Icelandic language is difficult, some Embassy personnel learn to read newspapers and carry on basic conversations. Their efforts are greatly appreciated by Icelanders.

Foreigners are often confused by Icelandic family names. Few continuing family names are used. The given name is the primary name, and the surname tells only the given name of the father. Surnames for males are formed by adding "son" to the possessive form of the father's given name. For females, the suffix "dottir" is added to the father's given name. The wife keeps her maiden name. The Icelandic telephone book, as a result, is arranged alphabetically by the first name.

Iceland's population is about 97% Lutheran. Although Lutheranism is the state religion, Iceland has complete religious freedom. Catholics number nearly 1,700 and have their own church. The population also includes some 3,700 members of other religious denominations. All local church services are in Icelandic, but many clergymen speak English. Religious services in English are conducted monthly by NATO base chaplains at the University of Iceland chapel.

Icelandic modes of dress, housing, and foods are similar to those in other Nordic countries. In 1981, about 8.2% of the population was earning its living from farming; 14% from fishing and fish processing; 17.7% from manufacturing; 10.1% from construction; 15.2% from commerce; 7.4% from communications; and the remaining 27.4% from other service industries. Iceland has virtually no unemployment.

Public Institutions

Iceland elects a president every 4 years. The President has largely ceremonial responsibilities, and it has been the custom that incumbent presidents who stand for reelection are not opposed. In 1980, Icelanders elected the first (elected) female head of state in the world, who won a second term in 1984 as, following custom, no one opposed her candidacy.

Coalition government has been the rule in Icelandic politics for most of the Republic's history. The government that took office in May 1983, is comprised of the Independence Party (IP) with 23 parliamentary seats, and the Progressive Party (PP) with 14 seats. Parties in the Opposition include the People's Alliance (PA) with 10 seats; the Social Democratic Party (SDF), 6; the Social Democratic Alliance (SDA), 4; and the Women's List (WL), with 3 seats, in the current 60-seat Althing.

Legislative power rests with the Althing, or Icelandic parliament, which is divided by internal elections into an Upper House and a Lower House. The usual parliamentary pattern obtains, with executive power vested in the Prime Minister and Cabinet. A written Constitution provides for a system of national and local courts to administer justice, and specifically guarantees personal liberties.

Iceland has an independent judiciary. A Supreme Court sits in Reykjavik, and criminal cases are handled by the state prosecuting attorney. The judicial system includes district and town judges, a Maritime Court, and an Arbitration Court for adjudication of labor disputes.

Iceland is divided into 34 districts and 22 towns. Each district and town is administered by a magistrate responsible to an elected council of 7–15 members. Normally, in the larger towns a coalition of political parties within the council will form a governing majority. Principal responsibilities of magistrates include police administration, tax collection, and the administration of state old-age pensions and other social benefits. Historically, the mayor of Reykjavik has been an important political figure. Four postwar Prime Ministers of Iceland were former mayors of the city.

Arts, Science, and Education

Icelanders have traditionally had a strong interest in education and the arts. The literacy rate is 99.9%. Reykjavik has a wide variety of bookstores including one devoted exclusively to English-language books. Book prices are high.

Painting, sculpture, theater, and music are enthusiastically supported. Museums and legitimate theaters feature Icelandic creative works as well as foreign productions, including a few American productions.

A National Research Council coordinates research and helps administer government policy in scientific and technological matters. A variety of research is conducted by institutes of marine science, fisheries, agriculture, industry, and construction engineering. The Surtsey Society conducts research on Surtsey Island. It coordinates international scientific efforts concerned with the newly formed volcanic island.

Education is compulsory for children aged 7–15. The University of Iceland in Reykjavik has about 3,600 students. It has departments of law, philosophy, economics, Icelandic language and literature, theology, medicine, dentistry, and engineering. The Saga manuscripts, returned from Denmark in 1971, are housed in the university's Manuscript Institute.

The Reykjavik Music Society, the Icelandic Opera, and the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra, among other local musical organizations, offer frequent performances of classical music, and local social clubs sponsor Icelandic and visiting concert artists. The Icelandic Symphony Orchestra offers a concert series every other week during the fall, winter, and spring, often featuring internationally famous guest artists. Well-known jazz musicians perform several times a year in Iceland.

Reykjavik sponsors an Arts Festival every other June. It features classical, rock, jazz, and folk music concerts by well-known performers as well as art exhibits. Reykjavik has 10 cinemas featuring mainly U.S. movies in English. In addition, university and college film clubs offer classic and foreign films.

Commerce and Industry

Iceland's 1984 estimated GNP is about $2.2 billion, or roughly $9,000 per capita. The economy is based on private enterprise, cooperative societies, and government ownership. The cooperative movement plays a major role in manufacturing, fish processing, importing, retailing, banking, and insurance.

The national and municipal governments—directly and through the banking system and investment funds—control a large share of the financial resources available to Icelandic business firms. Government involvement is widespread in shipbuilding, fish processing, communications, and electric power generation and distribution. The national government owns and operates one cement and one fertilizer plant.

Iceland depends on imports for many of its needs. Fishery products generally account for some 70% of export earnings. The largest overseas market for Iceland's cod and other fish fillets is the U.S., which bought about 30% of Iceland's fish exports in 1983. The U.S. is also Iceland's largest customer overall, having taken over 28% of Iceland's total exports in 1983.

Other major trading partners include the U.K., and the F.R.G. Iceland depends largely on the U.S.S.R. for petroleum. Through bilateral agreement with the Soviet Union, Icelandic fish, wool products, and paint are exchanged for Soviet petroleum. Iceland's future industrial development will hinge on its abundant hydroelectric and geothermal power and on the government's attitude towards foreign investment. Apart from the fish processing industry, hydroelectric power installations, a diatomite plant, a ferrosilicon plant, and a Swiss-owned aluminum smelter, industry is rather small scale and geared mainly to meet local consumption needs.

Transportation

Automobiles

There is no particular reason to reject the idea of bringing to Iceland any European, Japanese, or American car you now own if it is providing good service. However, imports of American cars have declined precipitously in recent years, and most dealers are concentrating their service activities on their Japanese and European franchises. For newer American cars, particularly, the differences between diplomatic and export-model U.S. vehicles can complicate local servicing, and obtaining the right parts for American cars can cause delays in getting back on the road.

If you are interested in exploring the countryside and camping, a four-wheel drive vehicle would be useful, although the main ring road around Iceland and the principal tourism sites in the vicinity of Reykjavik are accessible by ordinary car. European-specification cars can be purchased from Icelandic dealers on arrival at duty-free prices well below U.S. prices, but of course could not be exported to the U.S. on completion of tour. Cars equipped to U.S. specifications may be ordered through some local dealers, but disconnecting and reconnecting their pollution-control devices to take them on to the U.S. can be an expensive proposition. Cars may be sold in Iceland on completion of tour.

All vehicles must be inspected before getting licence plates and are then inspected again each year. All cars must be equipped with shoulder seatbelts in the front seats. Driving is on the right. Cars must have mudflaps, which can be obtained locally.

Spare parts are expensive but are generally in stock. Bring a small stock of spark plugs, fan belts, oil filters, etc., to avoid the high cost of repairs.

All vehicles must carry third-party liability insurance purchased through local insurance firms. You can buy other coverage from Icelandic, U.S., or European firms. The Embassy suggests purchasing insurance in Iceland. A no-claims bonus can be obtained if you can present a letter from your previous insurer showing no accident claims for the past 3 years.

Bring a valid U.S. or other national drivers license with you. Otherwise, it costs about $220, including the cost of driving lessons, to obtain an Icelandic drivers permit.

Local

Local taxi and bus service is safe and efficient. Taxis are metered and zoned. They are widely used and readily available but cost more than in New York or Washington, D.C. Tipping is not customary anywhere in Iceland, not even in restaurants.

Regional

Iceland has no railroads or streetcars. Except for the paved road to Keflavik and scattered segments of the ring road around the island, roads outside Reykjavik are mainly dirt or gravel of good to fair quality; however, nearly all inhabited parts of Iceland can be reached by car during summer (early June to mid-September). A four-wheel drive vehicle with high road clearance is needed for trips to much of the country's interior. For trips to most locations outside Reykjavik during summer, however, a four-wheel drive vehicle is not needed. Automobile travel outside Reykjavik, with the exception of the Keflavik road, is impossible during winter. Icelandair (Flugleidir) and Eagle Air are the only carriers which provide Iceland with regularly scheduled international service. Beginning in the summer of 1982, Eagle Air joined Icelandair in offering scheduled service to Europe, but only Icelandair has scheduled flights to the U.S. It flies DC-8s and Boeing 727s from Keflavik. A car ferry operates, with weekly sailings during the months of June through August, between Seydisfjordur, 461 kilometers to the east of Reykjavik, the Faroe Islands, Denmark, Scotland, and Norway.

Communications

Telephone and Telegraph

State-owned telephone service is available to all parts of Iceland and principal points throughout the world. Connections to the U.S. are reasonably quick and clear. Direct-dial to the U.S. and most parts of Europe is available. Charges for direct-dial to the U.S. are about $2.00 a minute and about $2.25 for operator-assisted calls (with a 3-minute minimum on the latter). Home phone installation is about $200, so phones of departing personnel are often saved for their replacements. Quarterly service costs are about $26.

Reliable telegraph service is also available. Telegraphic service to the U.S. costs about $4.90 plus 30¢ a word.

Mail and Pouch

International airmail to the U.S. takes 3–10 days depending on destination and costs about 34¢ for the first 20 grams. Air letters cost 30¢. Mail service is reliable, and you can safely mail checks to the U.S. Embassy personnel also use the Fleet Post Office (FPO) at the NATO base where U.S. postage rates apply; mail travels by air to New York. FPO mail arrives daily (weather permitting) and parcel post about three times a week. All parcel post is sent by air from New York. The Embassy picks up mail at the base 5 days a week. The FPO mailing address is:

Full Name
American Embassy
FPO New York 09571-0001

(For USIS–FPO New York 09571-0002)

The international mailing address is:

Full Name
American Embassy
Post Office Box 40
121 Reykjavik
Iceland

Embassy personnel generally use FPO for parcel post from the U.S. Size and weight limits on packages sent via FPO are much higher than those on packages sent by international mail. (FPO limits are 70 pounds and 100 inches in length and girth combined.)

Radio and TV

The Keflavik Base operates a closed-circuit cable TV and FM radio system, neither receivable in Reykjavik residences. There is a microwave link to the Chancery, Ambassador's residence, and the Marine House for base TV. Satellite feeds of major U.S. and international current affairs or sports events can thus be viewed or taped on Embassy premises. The Navy AM radio station broadcasts 24 hours daily, and can be heard in Reykjavik, though not farther away from the NATO Base.

Icelandic radio operates on LW and FM and offers popular and classical music and conversation programs. The station operates from 7 am to midnight daily. Icelandic television transmits about 4 hours a day, every day except Thursday, but American TVs will not receive Icelandic broadcasts, which utilize the PAL system. American TVs with transformers supposedly can be adjusted to receive Icelandic TV; however, it is probably better to buy a new set here for local use. Some programs are in English. Icelandic radio and television are state owned and operated.

A good shortwave radio is recommended. BBC and VOA program reception are reasonably good and an excellent supplement to Icelandic and U.S. publications.

The increasingly popular video cassettes, which are available for rental in the American NTSC system at the NATO Base, make it worthwhile to bring your present TV and VCR for operation through a transformer, even if they are American system only. Multisystem TV sets and VCRs are available through the Navy Exchange at the NATO Base. Many rental outlets for tapes on the Icelandic PAL system are located in Reykjavik, at quite reasonable prices.

Newspapers, Magazines, and Technical Journals

Delivery of the *New York Times* varies according to the number of scheduled flights between New York and Iceland. The Hague edition of the *International Herald Tribune* arrives 4–7 days late. Hometown papers sent via FPO take 8 days to 2 weeks with several issues often being received at one time. European editions of *Time* and *Newsweek* are sold at local newsstands. If you have a subscription to such periodicals, you will receive faster service if you use the international address of the Embassy (not FPO). You can purchase many English-language magazines at the Keflavik NATO Base or can read them at the USIS Library, which receives 3 daily newspapers as well as 120 different periodicals and publications. Reykjavik has five daily newspapers, all in Icelandic.

Health and Medicine

Medical Facilities

Reykjavik medical facilities equal those in comparably sized U.S. cities. The University of Iceland has its own medical school. Many Icelandic doctors and dentists have been trained in the U.S. and Europe. Reykjavik has four well-equipped and well-staffed hospitals, although they are usually crowded. Iceland has a state medical program, and doctor's fees are reasonable by U.S. standards. Drugs and pharmaceuticals are expensive for foreigners.

Facilities for standard laboratory work are available, but for very sophisticated evaluation the tests must be sent abroad. All medicines are sold only by prescription.

Embassy personnel may use the Keflavik base hospital, although illnesses or medical conditions requiring specialists are frequently referred to Icelandic physicians. Icelandic dentists are competent and prices are comparable to those in the U.S. Orthodontia is also available in Reykjavik.

Obstetric care is satisfactory. Child delivery can be in either a Reykjavik hospital, a nursing home (where it is normally handled by midwives), or the NATO base hospital where an OB/GYN physician is resident. Iceland has the lowest infant mortality and the highest longevity rates in the world.

Community Health

Reykjavik is a remarkably tidy city, almost entirely free of pollution (except when the fishmeal plants are operating). Iceland has no serious endemic diseases or health hazards. In fact, disease is less prevalent here than in the U.S. or Western Europe. Influenza, whooping cough, measles, chicken pox, and pneumonia are the most common ailments. Most people have at least one bad cold a year during the long, damp winter.

Water throughout Iceland is potable, pollution free, and so tasty it is often called "Icelandic champagne." It is not fluoridated. You can drink water from streams without boiling it. While hot water in homes has a slight sulphurous smell, it is completely safe to drink—although you must be cautious as it comes out of the tap at 176°F. Government standards for food inspection are high, and foods bought on the local market can be eaten without special preparation or treatment. Milk is pasteurized and government controlled. Garbage is collected by the city about once a week.

Preventive Measures

No special immunizations or therapeutic treatments are required before coming here, but German measles and mumps shots are advisable for infants and young children, as are polio vaccine and the other usual shots given as a matter of routine in the U.S. Qualified pediatricians are readily available here. Most children have no special health problems.

Those who suffer from respiratory ailments, rheumatism, or arthritis may find that Iceland's wet weather will aggravate these conditions. On the other hand, dryness from the heating system and the constant winds may aggravate sinuses and dry skin.

Most local doctors recommend using supplemental vitamins during winter to offset the lack of sunshine and fresh produce. Bring supplemental fluoride tablets or combination vitamins for children. Combination vitamins are sold at the base commissary.

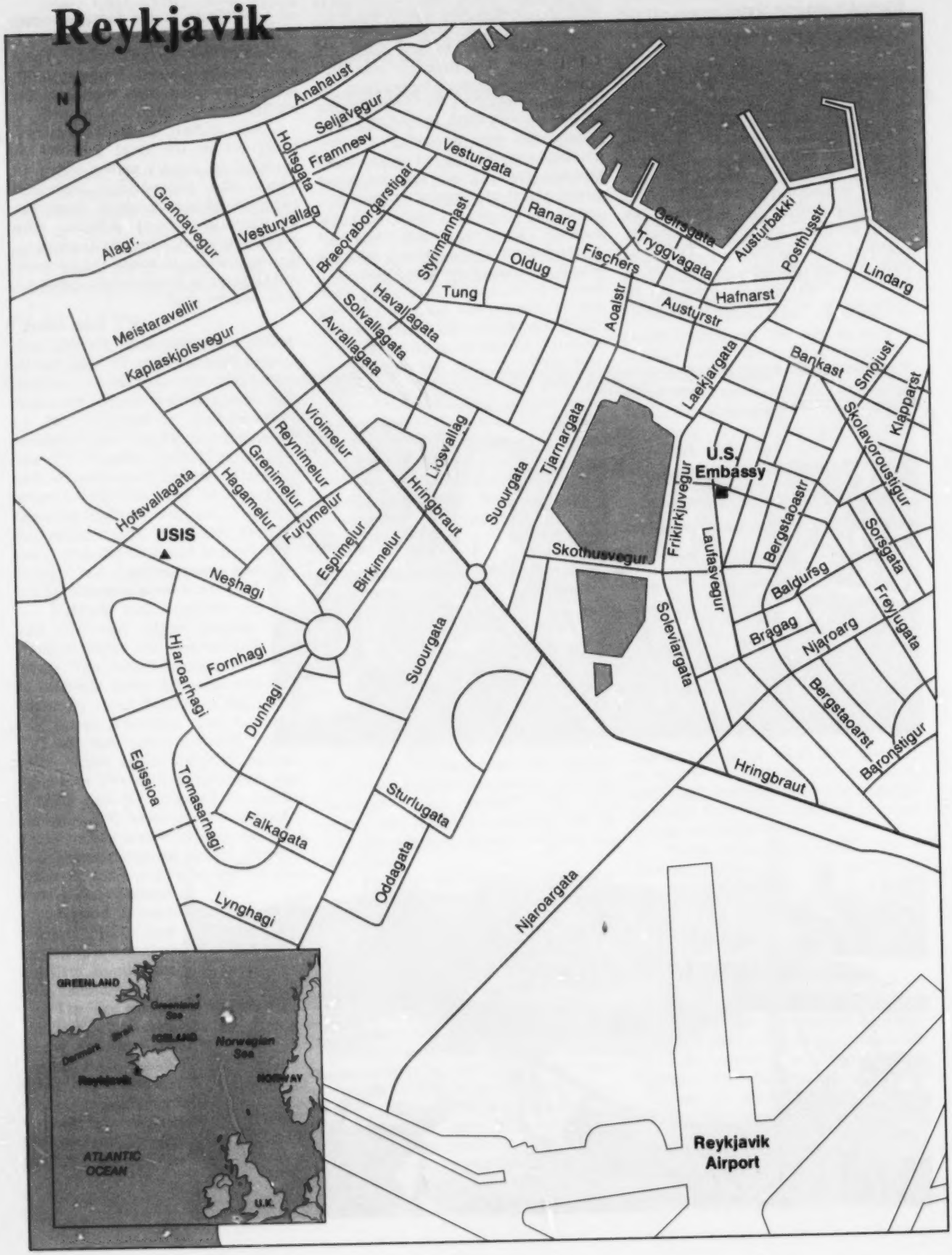
Employment for Spouses and Dependents

Employment opportunities within the U.S. Mission are limited. Currently, two PIT (part-time, intermittent, temporary) positions exist for qualified spouses or dependents: a computer systems manager, responsible for system management and operation of the Wang system, and a 20-hour per week position for the Community Liason Office coordinator. The computer systems manager is a long-term position which may be filled by an Icelander when the present occupant departs. There is also a contract position which provides mail delivery and mail pickup daily to and from the NATO Base. The Embassy also supports a Teen Summer Hire program for dependents aged 13-19. Employment outside the U.S. Mission is possible to arrange, but difficult to find.

Part-time summer employment for teenagers, who have been employed in fish processing plants, bottling factories, and other local firms, has been possible. Since the U.S. has no bilateral work agreement for families of official personnel, all employment of dependents in the local economy depends upon *ad hoc* approval of work permits by the Foreign Ministry. These are normally granted. Embassy/USIS dependents may not work at the NATO Base.

All other employment of foreigners in the local economy is governed by a work permit system in which the prospective Icelandic employer obtains a permit from the Ministry of Social Affairs. The availability of such permits depends on the fluctuations of needs and levels of employment in the Icelandic economy from year to year.

Left: Library at USIS.
Below: Local fishing harbor.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American Embassy

Reykjavik

Reykjavik is the capital of Iceland and its largest city. On the southwest coast, it lies on a peninsula extending northwest into the sea, at 64° N and 22° W.

Reykjavik is a modern, picturesque city. New buildings of reinforced concrete are rapidly replacing older wooden frames and corrugated iron structures similar to those found in northern Norway. Small detached and semidetached houses and numerous apartment buildings are found in the city. Houses are well built, comfortable, small, and modern.

Most of the city's central heating is supplied by hot springs. In 1928, the use of hot springs for space heating began. It has been expanded to serve the entire city. Reykjavik is often referred to as the "smokeless city" because of this heating method.

Reykjavik is the seat of government and the focal point of Icelandic cultural activity. It is the site of the University of Iceland, which was founded in 1911. In Reykjavik are a museum of natural history, a national museum, two art museums, a municipal and a national theater, a national orchestra, an opera, art galleries, libraries, 10 movie houses, an outdoor stadium, an indoor arena, and state radio and television stations. The city has thermally heated outdoor swimming pools which are open all year, three small lakes teeming with wild bird life year round, and several parks.

Reykjavik's terrain is essentially barren lava; however, the mountains and natural harbor form a scenic setting for the capital. The harbor, with its extensive shipping and fishing activities, is the lifeline of the city.

Reykjavik enjoys a high living standard, similar to that in other Western European capitals.

The Post and Its Administration

In September 1944, about 3 months after Iceland declared its independence from Denmark, the U.S. established a Legation in Reykjavik. The U.S. thus became the first country to recognize Iceland's sovereignty. The Legation was elevated to Embassy status in October 1955. The Embassy is the only Foreign Service post in Iceland—located at Laufasvegur 21. USIS is located in modern facilities at Neshagi 16, about a mile from the Embassy. Office hours for Embassy personnel and USIS personnel are 8 am to 12:30 pm and 1:30 pm to 5 pm, Monday through Friday, from September through May. In summer, hours are 8 am to noon and 12:30 pm to 4:30 pm. The Chancery has no restaurants or other eating facilities, and since restaurants are expensive, most staff members go home for lunch.

The Embassy staff is composed of the Ambassador, DCM, political officer, political/military affairs officer, economic/commercial officer, administrative officer, consular officer, 4 American secretaries, 2 communicators, 6 Marine Security Guards, and 11 Foreign Service national employees. USIS has 2 American officers and 8 Foreign Service national employees.

Notify the Embassy of your travel plans. You will be met at the International Airport at Keflavik and assisted through customs. If by chance an Embassy staff member is not at the airport to meet you when you arrive, phone the Embassy at 29100. The switchboard is open 24 hours. USIS phone numbers are 62-1020, 62-1021, and 62-1022.

Housing

Temporary Quarters

Hotels are good but can be expensive. Rooms are ordinarily available except during the peak summer tourist season. Personnel assigned to the Embassy usually stay at the Hotel Holt or Hotel Loftleidir; those assigned to USIS find the Hotel Saga most convenient. All three hotels are modern and have good facilities, but rooms are small and are not suited for long family stays. All rooms lack cooking facilities. The Embassy will assist new personnel in locating permanent living quarters. Restaurants in Iceland are expensive, even by U.S. standards, and can pose a real financial problem, especially if you must stay in a hotel for any length of time. Meals in the least expensive cafeterias can cost $20–$25 a day for adults, and three ordinary hotel meals $40–$45 per person.

Permanent Housing

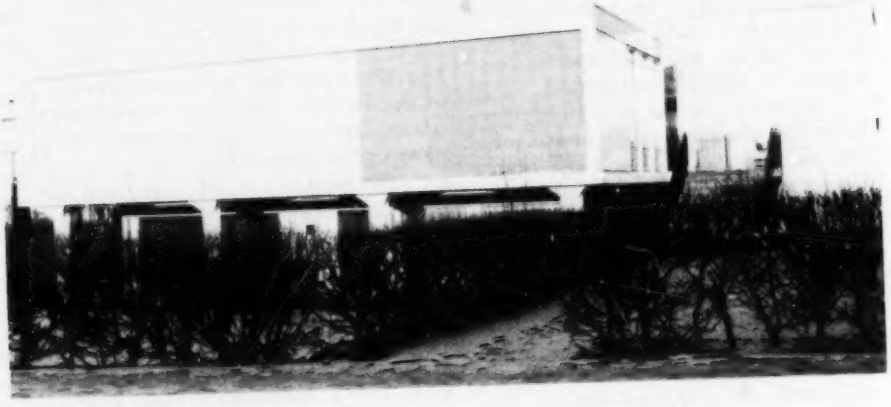
The U.S. Government owns three buildings in Reykjavik—the Ambassador's residence and the Chancery, which are adjoining buildings, and the Marine Security Guard house. The three units enclose the Embassy garden and form a small compound surrounded by a masonry wall.

The Ambassador's residence is a three-story concrete building with stucco exterior. It faces the street and has no front lawn, but has a small garden at the rear of the building. The basement has a powder room for guests, a large kitchen, sauna, laundry room, servants' bathroom, servants' quarters consisting of a bedroom and sitting room, and storage areas. The first floor has an entrance hall, a small pantry, living room, den with fireplace, dining room, and enclosed patio. The second floor has a master bedroom with dressing room, bathroom and study, two other double bedrooms, one single bedroom, and two other baths.

The Embassy has short-term government leases on a four-bedroom DCM home, a five-bedroom PAO home, and several apartments/houses

Embassy and Ambassador's residence.

DCM's home.



Three- to four-bedroom house.

Four-bedroom house.

Two-level apartment on the seaside.

American Cultural Center.

for American staff personnel and the Marine NCOIC. All of these housing units are furnished, including washers, dryers, stoves, and refrigerators.

Housing is not plentiful in any form. A single-family detached house in particular may be difficult to obtain. Most houses are designed for multiple occupancy because of the high construction and financing costs. The Embassy is moving toward government leases on all housing, some of which will be government furnished. Most personnel can expect to move into Embassy-held accommodations on arrival. A short hotel stay may be necessary if new or more adequate quarters must be obtained.

Furnishings

Residences for the Ambassador, DCM, American secretaries, and the Marine NCOIC are fully furnished. Most other personnel posted here will be authorized a full shipment of effects. Some furniture is manufactured locally but bring what you need if the post informs you that you will not be receiving furnished quarters.

Skilled carpenters, cabinetmakers, and upholsterers are available but are fairly expensive. Curtain and drapery materials are available but costly.

The Embassy has Welcome Kits for personnel moving into permanent quarters. The kits include linens, cooking utensils, irons, etc. The Embassy also has some furniture, such as beds and tables, available for temporary loan.

Utilities and Equipment

Electric current is 220v, 50-cycle, single-phase, AC. Motors wired for 60 cycles will operate on the local current, but can overheat when run continually. Electric appliances equipped for 110v, except clocks, record players, etc., can be operated with a transformer on the local current. U.S. record players must be converted from 60 to 50 cycles to operate properly. Normally, this takes only a small, inexpensive device which is quickly installed. It is best to do this before you come. Step-down transformers may be purchased locally; the Embassy provides a reasonable number of transformers for each house. Wall sockets are usually the European two-pronged tubular type. Conversion plugs to adapt U.S. plugs to Icelandic wall sockets are available and inexpensive. No special wiring is needed for lamps, but 110v bulbs cannot be used. The NATO Base sells some dual voltage equipment, e.g. stereo equipment.

You quickly become used to the slight sulphur smell of the hot water, which is geothermally heated. The natural hot water is excellent for washing clothes but will blacken silver not rinsed immediately in cold water, which is nonsulphurous. Bring everyday stainless steel flatware. You can buy 110v hand appliances at the base exchange and use them with transformers. Room vaporizes or humidifiers are often useful. Air-conditioners are definitely not needed.

Food

Except for such items as milk, bread, lamb, and fish, local food is quite expensive. Most Embassy personnel buy groceries, sundries, and department store items at the commissary and Navy Exchange at Keflavik. The commissary compares in variety and quality of merchandise to a very small U.S. supermarket. Beef and poultry are of good quality and are generally available. Pork is limited and usually frozen. A complete stock of canned and frozen food is also available, but selection of brands is limited. Fresh produce is shipped to the base weekly and is usually of fair quality, although availability varies with the seasons. Other commissary and exchange stocks also are limited with some items not always available. Prices are comparable to U.S. supermarket prices. Uncooked meats cannot be imported into the country.

Food stores and supermarkets in Reykjavik offer a full range of U.S. and European items at higher prices than at the base. Every neighborhood in Reykjavik has a bakery, fish shop, and dairy store. High quality bread and cakes are baked and sold fresh daily as are many types of fish which are caught in the nearby sea. Dairy stores feature many types of cheese, yogurt, "skyr" (a type of Icelandic yogurt), cream, and a number of milk products not found in the U.S. All Icelandic food items are of high quality and are completely safe to eat.

Clothing

The Ambassador and DCM (when acting as charge) need formal wear. This includes white tie for men and formal dress for women. You can rent black tie but not white tie outfits locally. All male officers should bring black tie outfits. Some diplomatic corps functions and the annual Foreign Minister's dinner for the diplomatic corps call for black tie. Female officers will occasionally need long evening gowns and rarely formals. The Navy Exchange carries some basic clothes for everyone, although styles and stocks are limited. Many people order clothing through U.S. catalog stores.

Bring all shoes and boots, especially rubber rain and snow boots; however, all are available on the local market, or at the base exchange. Local stores are expensive and styles do not always appeal to American tastes, although cleated galoshes sold in Reykjavik are useful on the windy, icy winter streets. In general, all family members should have adequate clothing for a cold climate.

Iceland produces fine woolen goods, especially sweaters, at quite reasonable prices, but all other clothing is expensive. Selection both in Reykjavik and at the base exchange is limited. Bring everything you think you will need during your tour. A raincoat with removable lining is quite useful, and hikers should bring thermal underwear, sturdy boots or walking shoes, as well as rain gear.

Men. Men wear wool suits all year, but bring fall- and summerweight suits for travel outside of Iceland and for those warm days of summer when lighter clothing is more comfortable.

Women. Long dresses or skirts are sometimes worn but cocktail-type dresses are suitable for all but the most formal occasions. Wool suits and dresses and pantsuits are useful. Handknit Icelandic sweaters are an outstanding value and are worn frequently. Head scarves and plastic rain bonnets are necessary. A winterweight raincoat with removable lining, a spring coat, and a summerweight coat are useful. Coats are worn most of the time. Bring boots for protecting shoes in winter, and year round in the rain. Icelandic women dress fashionably, buying their clothes and shoes in the U.S. and Europe or buying imported items here at prices three to four times higher than in the U.S. Local dressmakers are expensive and not always satisfactory. Maternity clothing is expensive here and in limited supply at the base.

Children. Children's clothing is expensive. The Navy Exchange has only limited stock, so bring what you need. Children tend to play outdoors year round even in the most inclement weather. Good rain gear and boots are highly recommended.

Supplies and Services

Supplies

Common toiletries, cosmetics, personal feminine items, and household needs are sold at the Navy Exchange where they are less expensive than at local stores. Selection is often limited, so bring your favorite brands. The base exchange offers cameras, film, home entertainment equipment, luggage, watches, etc. Classical records and tape selections are limited. Prices, in general, are equivalent to U.S. discount prices.

All personnel are issued identification cards allowing them access to commissary and exchange facilities at the NATO Base. Embassy personnel are required to show a card to Icelandic customs officials each time they leave the base with merchandise. The Embassy administrative officer distributes the cards as needed.

Alcoholic beverages and tobacco are purchased from the State Monopoly at tax-free prices, but beer is available only at the NATO Base. Children's toys are expensive in Reykjavik and are in limited supply at the base exchange. Bring some toys for birthday gifts and other special occasions. The exchange also occasionally carries some sporting equipment, but bring anything your children will need to post. Some recreational equipment may be rented at the base, but supplies are limited and demand high.

Basic Services

Men's tailoring is fair. Men's suits can be "made to order" through the Navy Exchange or bought from a local tailor. Laundries and drycleaning are adequate and conveniently located, but there are no Laundromats. Local prices for laundry and drycleaning are the same as in New York or Washington, but base exchange prices are lower.

Reykjavik has several hairdressers and barber shops. Services are expensive, but the work is of highest quality. A hairdresser and a barbershop are also available at the NATO Base.

Radio and TV repairs are reliable but expensive. Parts for American sets are usually not available and must be ordered from the U.S. The base also has repair facilities for TV and stereo equipment.

Domestic Help

Domestic help is extremely difficult to find. Icelanders do not normally employ full-time servants. Some women do housework and help cook and serve at dinners and receptions for about $4.50 an hour. The rate includes any taxes that might be owed by the employee.

Babysitters charge about $2.00 or more an hour and are difficult to find on short notice.

Religious Activities

Protestant and Catholic services in Reykjavik are in Icelandic, but most clergymen speak English. You can participate in religious activities at the base where Catholic, Protestant, and occasionally Jewish services are held in English. A chaplain from the NATO Base conducts a monthly nondenominational service in Reykjavik.

Education

Dependent Education

The American Embassy School provides an American-style primary education from kindergarten through grade 5. Icelanders and English-speaking children of foreign diplomats and residents have been encouraged to attend. The student population varies from year to year. The school is located in three rooms in an apartment building close to the Embassy and the center of Reykjavik. The teacher/principal and one other teacher are U.S. citizens, and both hold degrees from American universities. The school is well equipped with modern educational materials and supplies. No other English-speaking schools exist in Reykjavik.

Nursery school is a problem because schools are few and waiting lists are long. Embassy parents can expect a long wait before their children are admitted, since preference is given to Icelandic mothers who work.

Embassy children may also attend the elementary, junior, and senior high schools at the Keflavik NATO Base, 32 miles from Reykjavik.

Free school bus service is provided. Morning pickup is about 7 am and students return home about 4 pm. The bus picks up and leaves each child at his or her home. No after-school transportation is available for activities beyond 5 p.m. The base does not have boarding facilities. Tuition costs are covered by an educational allowance. As an alternative, the State Department provides the maximum education allowance for any students desiring to attend boarding school away from post.

Post Orientation Program

Orientation is informal and is geared to your assignment at the Mission. The Ambassador personally briefs each new arrival on U.S.-Icelandic relations. The Administrative Section will help you get settled. Reykjavik is a small post and newcomers can expect a warm welcome from the entire staff.

Icelandic language classes are conducted for Embassy personnel and their spouses. All are encouraged to participate.

Recreation and Social Life

Sports

The most popular family sport in Iceland is swimming, done year round in pools and natural hot water. Reykjavik has three outdoor and two indoor pools. Charges are nominal and facilities are excellent.

The major spectator sports are soccer, European handball (a combination of basketball and soccer), and basketball. Embassy personnel can participate by joining one of the several Reykjavik athletic clubs, but may not take part in the competition.

Near Reykjavik are four ski areas, but you cannot count on sufficient snow in the area for skiing every year. Trips to Akureyri, where skiing conditions are more reliable, are frequently arranged. Regular downhill and cross-country skiing usually starts in January and continues through April. Glacier skiing is good throughout summer. A ski school is situated on one of the glaciers. In addition, the Base Recreation Association and Icelandic Tourist Offices run inexpensive ski tours to well-known European ski areas.

The several badminton and racquetball courts at clubs and schools are usually in great demand. Embassy personnel can join a badminton club for a reasonable fee.

The Reykjavik area has three golf courses, and another course is available near the base. Though weather conditions have to be considered, Iceland has many golfing enthusiasts.

Except in the winter, horseback riding is possible on trails and unpaved roads in the Reykjavik area. Icelandic horses are small, powerful, and independent-minded creatures. Horses can be rented near Reykjavik at prices somewhat higher than those in Washington, D.C. Cross-country trips on horseback are offered by the Tourist Bureau. This is a sport that both adults and children enjoy. The usual riding dress is either riding breeches or Levis, knee-length rubber boots, and a weatherproof parka with hood. Rubber boots are used since riders often ride in the surf or ford small streams. Horse shows are held on summer weekends, and these include racing, which is not comparable to thoroughbred racing. No betting is allowed in Iceland.

Birdwatching is a popular activity. Iceland is world famous for its variety of birds. Beautiful Lake Myvatn in the north is noted for its waterfowl, including some not found anywhere else in Europe.

Some hunting opportunities exist. The season for geese and ptarmigan varies from 1½ to 3 months in the fall. Reindeer hunting is permitted in the eastern part of the country when government permission, based on the size of the herd, allows it. Only the most dedicated hunters participate, however, since the game is carried on foot or horseback to the nearest road.

Persons interested in fishing from all over the world are attracted to the outstanding salmon streams in Iceland. Most of the better streams are rented to Icelandic clubs or to individuals, and fishing time must be reserved months in advance. Unless you are lucky enough to be invited as a guest, the average charge per rod a day is a startling U.S. $250–$600. Trout fishing is also excellent and much less expensive, averaging U.S. $5–$10 per rod a day. Sea trout and German brown trout are found in streams near Reykjavik. Faxa Bay has good deep sea fishing, especially codfish, halibut, and haddock. A boat may be chartered for fishing parties. The Icelandic Government does not require hunting and fishing licenses, but landowners require application with fee.

Reykjavik has five outdoor, asphalt tennis courts. Play is restricted by the weather. Interest in track and field is strong, and many joggers run in parks or at the university's 400-meter track. The country has no indoor tracks, but the long dark winter makes indoor devices such as stationary bicycles a good idea for those interested in keeping fit. The base exchange sometimes has these in stock at reasonable prices.

If you plan to do much camping, fishing, or hunting, bring your own gear. Good equipment can be imported duty free.

Extensive and unusual camping opportunities are available during the short summer in Iceland. It is easy to find an area affording complete privacy, and once in the countryside you can pitch a tent almost anywhere. A few organized campsites with modern facilities are also available. Campers must be hardy since temperatures during summer range from 35°F to 60°F and rain and wind are frequent.

Touring and Outdoor Activities

Hiking and mountain climbing are interesting and rewarding. You must come equipped with sturdy hiking boots and suitable clothes for these activities.

The countryside is unusual and beautiful, and summer sightseeing can be delightful if the weather is good. Many sights are within easy driving distance of Reykjavik. The Krisuvik hot springs are 22 miles south. Thingvellir, site of the ancient Icelandic Parliament, is about 30 miles east and has a magnificent mountain view. Thingvellir is on the north shore of Thingvallavatn, Iceland's largest lake. Hveragerdi, a small settlement 25 miles east of the capital, has geothermal steam experiments in progress, including large, steam-heated greenhouses in which fruit and flowers grow. Laugarvatn, 60 miles east of Reykjavik, has a summer hotel and a lake warmed enough by subterranean heat to make swimming possible. At Geysir, a few miles farther east, is the world-famous spouter from which the word "geyser" derives. In the same area is Gullfoss, a magnificent waterfall. The well-known semiactive volcano, Hekla, is located southeast of Gullfoss.

During summer vacation, many schools and institutions in the country are used as tourist facilities.

Some Embassy personnel enjoy visiting these areas in informal groups by privately owned vehicles. Trips to remote areas are frequently organized by local travel agencies. Camping tours on four-wheel-drive buses are a good way to see remote areas.

The town of Akureyri is about 280 miles north of Reykjavik. Fnjoskadalur—an 8- to 12-hour drive from Reykjavik depending on road conditions, but only an hour's flight—is an excellent camping and picnic area. Nearby is Dettifoss, Europe's largest waterfall. Godafoss, another beautiful waterfall, and Lake Myvatn with unusual surroundings including lava and hot mud pools and beautiful scenery are also in the Akureyri area.

Vestfirdir (the Westfjords), on the northwest peninsula, although little visited by tourists, has magnificent scenery. The chief town, Isafjordur, is about 200 miles from Reykjavik and can be reached by car, air, or ship. The roads, like those elsewhere in the countryside, are poor and often impassable in winter. On the southeast coast of Iceland lies Vatnajokull, the largest glacier in the world outside the Antarctic and Greenland. About 185 miles from Reykjavik, the area has some of the country's most spectacular scenery. It takes a full day by car to reach this glacier. Hotel accommodations are scarce in this area, so bring camping gear unless you have made lodging reservations well in advance. Another site of particular interest is the island of Heimaey in the Westmann Islands. It was here in 1973 that the volcano Eldfjall was created by an eruption in a pasture near the town. The island was evacuated during the eruption, but most of the population has since returned. Quite a contrast exists between the untouched part of town and the desolation of the volcano area immediately adjoining. Part of the town remains buried under the lava.

Entertainment

Ten movie theaters in the Reykjavik area show mainly English-language films with Icelandic subtitles. The films are often a year or two old, but many are more recent.

Regular stage performances are first rate but sometimes difficult to understand unless you know the language well. Occasionally, the National Theater presents operas and musicals.

The Icelandic Symphony Orchestra presents a regular concert season averaging a concert twice monthly from October through May. Season tickets are available.

Several excellent restaurants are located in Reykjavik, and a number of other quite adequate eating places. Reykjavik has six or seven nightclubs including three at local hotels. All restaurants and nightclubs are expensive. Except at the base, beer is not sold or served in Iceland; however, a number of newly-established pubs serve nonalcoholic Icelandic beer laced with alcoholic spirits.

Embassy and USIS staff may use the NATO Base recreational facilities, which include a movie theater, bowling alley, swimming pool, gym with weight room, squash and racquetball courts, library, and hobby shops. Several clubs and Boy and Girl Scouts activities, meet here.

Social Activities

Among Americans. Because of the American community's small size here, social life among Americans is limited. The NATO Base has an Officers' Wives Club to which Embassy wives are invited for monthly luncheons and coffees.

International Contacts. The Icelandic-American Society sponsors a dinner-dance annually. Infrequent meetings and social events take place with other members of the small diplomatic community. Home hospitality is valued in Iceland. Embassy families have found coffees, luncheons, buffet dinners, and informal cocktail parties all congenial ways of entertaining Icelandic friends.

Some older school-age children, especially if coming directly from the U.S., may have adjustment problems. These may be heightened if they arrive in summer, long before school begins. Their playmates will be Icelandic children, many of whom may not speak English. An effort needs to be made, but Icelandic and American children will often find common interests, such as sports. Children who go to the NATO Base school sometimes find that children living on the base are influenced negatively by their surroundings, which they see as limited, and this can create morale problems. Because the school is 32 miles away from Reykjavik, activities there and with the base for children are limited, especially for high school-age students. School hours are limiting for activities in Reykjavik because most sports programs occur in the early afternoon. These problems are likely to be related to the child's age, mobility, and ability to shift for himself or herself. The adjustment period is longer for some children than others. The weather and long periods of darkness influence the mood of some children and adults.

Official Functions

Nature of Functions

Little official entertaining is done by Icelandic Government or business officials. The President of Iceland gives a white tie dinner each year for all Ambassadors and the Foreign Minister gives a black tie dinner-dance for Embassy officers below the rank of Ambassador. On New Year's Day, the President of Iceland receives ranking members of the diplomatic missions. Diplomatic missions have the usual social functions to commemorate anniversaries or national holidays.

Except for these regularly scheduled official functions, entertaining is done by individual invitation. Infrequency of official social functions means that considerable job-related entertainment is done in the home.

Apart from the U.S., the following countries have permanent missions in Iceland: Denmark, Finland, France, F.R.G., Norway, Sweden, U.K., and the U.S.S.R. The P.R.C., Czechoslovakia, and the G.D.R. have resident charge d' affaires in Iceland.

Three informal women's groups are open to Embassy wives. One is a bridge group which meets twice a month. Participants pay an entrance fee and the proceeds go to a local charity. A related sewing group also meets twice a month to make items for an annual Christmas bazaar which raises money for charity. Another group of Icelandic and diplomatic women meet once a week in member's homes for a French-language study group. Embassy wives with some knowledge of French are welcome as members.

The atmosphere at official functions is usually quiet and dignified but not rigid. Many Scandinavian customs are observed. Toasting at dinner follows certain patterns, but these are neither rigid nor complicated by formality, and it is best to wait until you arrive to learn them.

Standards of Social Conduct

The Icelandic community is informal, and no hard-and-fast rules for courtesy calls and the use of calling cards exist except as special circumstances dictate. Bring calling cards to post. Cards are available locally at high cost.

Special Information

Because of the informal atmosphere and the small community, government, business, and other officials are almost always available for appointments. Most, in fact, prefer not to plan their schedules far ahead and can frequently be seen on short notice.

Still-smouldering volcano, Eldfell, on Westman Island.

Notes For Travelers

Getting to the Post

Travel between the U.S. and Iceland is by air. Icelandair flies DC-8's from Keflavik to New York, Baltimore, Chicago, and Detroit during the summer season (May to October). From November through April, flight frequencies are drastically reduced. Flying time from New York is about 5 hours. Air connections to and from Luxembourg, Copenhagen, Oslo, Glasgow, and London are frequent. All international flights use Keflavik Airport.

An airport bus service takes passengers to the Hotel Loftleidir in Reykjavik, about a 10-minute drive from the Embassy and other hotels. On first arrival, an Embassy staff member will meet you at the Keflavik Airport.

Customs, Duties, and Passage

Customs and Duties

All Embassy and USIS personnel enjoy free-entry privileges for their personal and household effects, including automobiles, at any time during their tour of duty.

The Icelandic Government imposes no restrictions on color, weight, or origin of your car. The Embassy handles routine licensing of private vehicles.

Bring four passport-size photos for your drivers license and diplomatic identity cards. Airfreight from Washington takes about 3 weeks, while surface freight usually takes about 2 months. FPO parcel post is often delivered sooner than airfreight, since it is sent by air from the east coast and does not go through customs.

Passage

If assigned to the Embassy, it is advisable to get a visa before leaving the U.S. If this is not possible, the visa can be obtained after arrival at post. Visitors staying less than 3 months need no visa, and other visitors can, if necessary, get a visa after entering the country.

Pets

Icelandic law forbids **importing** live animals into the country. Keeping dogs, until recently, was banned in Reykjavik and the larger towns in Iceland. The Embassy has occasionally obtained special permission from the Icelandic State veternarian to import dogs and cats for Embassy personnel. If you are bringing a dog or cat to Iceland, the Embassy will require extensive information about the animal to obtain an import permit. Contact the Embassy administrative officer early to obtain the current requirements.

Firearms and Ammunition

Firearms may be imported under certain conditions, if you obtain advance approval from the appropriate police and customs authorities. Contact the Embassy administrative officer for details. Do **not** bring firearms without confirmation of approval of authorities.

Currency, Banking, and Weights and Measures

The official basic unit of currency is the Icelandic crown (krona, plural kronur, abbreviated IKr). In December 1984, the official exchange rate was around U.S.$1 = IKr40. The exchange rate may vary slightly.

Currency exchange facilities are adequate. The National Bank in Reykjavik and the American Express Bank at the NATO Base accept personal checks, travelers checks, U.S. Government checks, and other negotiable notes in exchange for Icelandic kronur at the legal rate. However, it is difficult to change kronur to dollars anywhere.

Embassy personnel may import an unlimited amount of U.S. dollars in currency, checks, drafts, or other negotiable instruments. Foreign (non-U.S.) currency may be imported from all Scandinavian and European countries (excluding communist bloc countries) in accordance with the currency control regulations of the country concerned. The National Bank of Iceland in Reykjavik will accept such currency and exchange it for Icelandic kronur.

Local banking facilities are adequate, but a checking account at an American bank, either in the U.S. or at the American Express Bank branch at the NATO Base at Keflavik, is highly recommended. Checks can be drawn on the American Express Bank for dollars or kronur. The Embassy fiscal unit cashes dollar checks for American employees and official visitors and offers accommodation exchange for kronur at the day's official rate.

You must pay hotel room charges with travelers checks, or U.S. currency or internationally known credit cards. The larger restaurants in Reykjavik accept both currencies, and most will accept credit cards. Most business places in Reykjavik accept dollars in small denominations, as well as credit cards. While the English system of weights and measures is familiar to most Icelanders, the official system is the metric system, as in other European countries.

Taxes, Exchange, and Sale of Property

Restrictions

American personnel do not have to pay personal income tax in Iceland. You are encouraged to import a car. If circumstances warrant, the Chief of Mission may authorize the importation of a second car. Sale of a private vehicle is permitted 2 years after purchase or registry in Iceland, or upon your transfer. An Icelandic buyer pays high customs duties and other charges at the time of purchase, but it is the responsibility of the American employee to see that they are paid. Sale to NATO Base personnel on a tax-free basis may also be approved after 2 years or at the end of your tour. American personnel must have permission from the Foreign Ministry before selling an automobile and written approval from the administrative officer to change kronur to dollars at the completion of their tour of duty.

A sales tax of 23.5% is levied on all goods, other than foods, sold in Iceland. Embassy personnel are liable for these taxes.

Foreign diplomatic missions and diplomatic agents may, however, obtain a refund of sales tax (including energy price adjustment charge) with respect to the following categories of goods, provided it is declared that the respective goods are intended for the use of the foreign diplomatic mission or the personal use of the diplomatic agent and the members of his family forming part of his household.

Recommended Reading

These titles are provided as a general indication of the material published on this country. The Department of State does not endorse unofficial publications.

American-Scandinavian Review. American-Scandinavian Foundation: 127 East 73d Street, New York, 10021. (Articles on Iceland often appear in this review.)

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Linklater, Eric, *The Ultimate Viking.* The Macmillan Company: NY, 1950.

Magnusson, Sigurdur A. *Northern Sphinx.* C. Hurst & Company: London, 1977.

National Geographic. Vol. 36, No. 2. August 1969. (Article on Iceland appears in this edition.)

National Geographic. Vol. 166, No. 3. September 1984. *"Running a Wild Glacier River in Iceland."*

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Nuechterlein, Donald E. *Iceland—Reluctant Ally.* Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1961.

Roberts, Dorothy James, ed. *Fire in the Ice.* Peter Davis: London, 1961.

Simpson, Colin. *The Viking Circle.* Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd.: London. (A chapter on touring the interior of Iceland appears in this book.)

Sutton, George M. *Iceland Summer.* University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, Okla., 1961.

Tomasson, Richard F. *Iceland, the First New Society.* University of Minnesota Press; Icelandic Review: Reykjavik, 1980.

Local Holidays

The following holidays apply for calendar year 1985:

January 1	New Year's Day
February 18	Washington's Birthday
April 4	Maundy Thursday
April 5	Good Friday
April 8	Easter Monday
April 25	First Day of Summer
May 1	Labor Day (International)
May 16	Ascension Day
May 27	Memorial Day
June 17	Icelandic Independence Day
July 4	Independence Day
August 5	Bank Hoilday
September 2	Labor Day
October 14	Columbus Day
November 11	Veterans' Day
November 28	Thanksgiving Day
December 24 (½ day)	Christmas Eve
December 25	Christmas Day
December 26	Boxing Day
December 31 (½ day)	News Year's Eve

Far left: Hot Springs at Krisuvik. Left: A whale bone arch in a park at Isafjordur, West Coast, Iceland.